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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-16 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9221

INFO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 0807

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PO, MZ, AO

SUBJ: SPINOLA'S CALL FOR SELF-DETERMINATION IN
PORTUGUESE AFRICA PRECIPITATES POLITICAL CRISIS

REF: LISBON 778

SUMMARY: BOOK BY VICE-CHIEF OF STAFF OF ARMED FORCES,
GEN. ANTONIO DE SPINOLA, CALLING FOR SELF-DETERMINATION FOR
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PORTUGAL'S OVERSEAS PROVINCES, HOPEFULLY WITHIN

LUSITANIAN FEDERATION (REFTEL), HAS PROVOKED STRONG REACTION FROM PRESIDENT THOMAZ AND HIS ALLIES ON THE RIGHT, OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT IN REFORMIST CIRCLES, AND CONFUSION AT ALL LEVELS OF POLITICAL LIFE IN PORTUGAL. WE UNDERSTAND HARDLINERS ARE CALLING FOR SPINOLA'S HEAD, WHILE COUNTER-RUMORS MAINTAIN THAT THOSE IN CENTER SEEK TO FORCE THOMAZ' RESIGNATION. PM CAETANO IS CAUGHT IN MIDDLE OF POWER SQUEEZE. PM WILL MAKE UNUSUAL MOVE OF ADDRESSING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND PROBABLY CALLING FOR VOTE OF CONFIDENCE LATER TODAY. END SUMMARY.

1. UNAMBIGUOUS CALL FOR REAL SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PORTUGAL'S AFRICAN TERRITORIES BY NATIONAL HERO, ARMED FORCES VICE-CHIEF OF STAFF GEN. SPINOLA, HAS STUNNED LISBON POLITICAL CIRCLES AND PRECIPITATED A GRAVE POLITICAL CRISIS. PRESSURES HAVE MOUNTED (A) AGAINST SPINOLA: PRESIDENT THOMAZ HAS REPORTEDLY DEMANDED SPINOLA'S IMMEDIATE OUSTER. THOMAZ IS HOSTILE TO ENTIRE SPINOLA ARGUMENT, WHICH PRESIDENT SEES AS DISMANTLING OF PORTUGUESE NATION. THOMAZ IS SAID TO BE PARTICULARLY OUTRAGED THAT SPINOLA BLAMES GOP'S "IMMOBILITY" FOR LOSS OF GOA, AND IS SAID TO TAKE THIS AS PERSONAL INSULT. THOMAZ REPORTEDLY ENJOYS SUPPORT OF MINISTERS MOREIRA BAPTISTA (INTERIOR), SILVA CUNHA (DEFENSE), AND ANDRADE E SILVA (ARMY), AS WELL AS HIS USUAL ALLIES FISHERIES CZAR ADM. HENRIQUE TENREIRO AND RIGHTIST IDEOLOGUE FRANCO NOGUEIRA, FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER. SOME (BUT NOT MANY) MILITARY OFFICERS SAID TO SUPPORT THOMAZ IN HIS DUMP-SPINOLA CAMPAIGN.

(B) AGAINST CAETANO: IN SOME RIGHT-WING CIRCLES, SPINOLA IS SEEN AS STALKING-HORSE FOR PRIME MINISTER, AND THUS CAETANO IS REAL ENEMY. IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED THAT SPINOLA'S BOOK HAD CAETANO'S ACQUIESCENCE, IF NOT HIS APPROVAL. THAT SUCH A BOOK COULD APPEAR AND ITS AUTHOR REMAIN IN POWERFUL POST IS INTOLERABLE FOR MANY ON THE RIGHT. PRESSURE ON CAETANO REPORTEDLY HAS DEPRESSED HIM AND CAUSED HIM TO CONSIDER RESIGNATION.

(C) AGAINST THOMAZ: ACCORDING TO SPECULATION, MOVE IS BUILDING TO OBLIGE THOMAZ TO RESIGN, ON GROUNDS THAT HE IS UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO DEAL WITH CHANGING REALITIES
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FACING PORTUGAL TODAY. SOME WHO TAKE THIS TACK HOPE CAETANO CAN TALK THOMAZ INTO RESIGNING (UNLIKELY), WHILE OTHERS SUGGEST THAT TOP MILITARY LEADERS SHOULD FORCE THOMAZ OUT--IN EFFECT, A MILITARY PUTSCH.

2. COMPOSITE OF REPORTS FROM RELIABLE SOURCES INDICATES SCENARIO IN AFTERMATH OF PUBLICATION OF SPINOLA'S BOOK WAS AS FOLLOWS: CAETANO LEFT LISBON FOR BRIEF REST

NEAR COIMBRA; AT INSTIGATION OF PRESIDENT THOMAZ, ARMY MINISTER AND DEFENSE MINISTER, WITH AGREEMENT OF INTERIOR MINISTER (WHO CONTROLS POLICE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES), DECIDED THAT SPINOLA SHOULD BE FIRED; MILITARY LEADERS, INCLUDING ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF COSTA GOMES (CLOSE ALLY OF SPINOLA'S), LEARNED OF SACK-SPINOLA MOVE AND BALKED. IN ADDITION, SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF MIDDLE-LEVEL MILITARY HAVE SHOWN SOLID SUPPORT FOR SPINOLA. RESULT WAS SPINOLA'S DISMISSAL STALLED. RETURNING TO LISBON, CAETANO WAS FACED WITH DEMANDS FOR SPINOLA'S OUSTER; CAETANO MET WITH THOMAZ ON FEBRUARY 28 AND MARCH 1 AND REPORTEDLY WAS LECTURED AT LENGTH IN STORMY SESSIONS OVER SPINOLA.

3. EACH FACTION HAS GREAT STRENGTHS: (A) SPINOLA HAS HIS REPUTATION AS A COURAGEOUS, ALMOST ASCETIC, PATRIOT WITH A SPLENDID RECORD. HE ALSO HAS THE FRIENDSHIP AND SOLIDARITY OF HIS BOSS, ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF COSTA GOMES. WITH PROSPECT THAT FIRING OF SPINOLA MIGHT ALSO BRING COSTA GOMES TO RESIGN, GETTING RID OF SPINOLA BECOMES ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT. IN ADDITION, SPINOLA IS WIDELY ADMIRERED IN THE ARMED FORCES, PROBABLY MORE THAN ANY OTHER LEADER. SPINOLA HAS SUPPORT OF THOSE MANY PORTUGUESE WHO HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO DO SOMETHING, OR ANYTHING. (B) CAETANO HAS SPINOLA AND COSTA GOMES, WITH ALL THEIR WELCOME BAGGAGE (ABOVE), AS LONG AS HE IS WILLING TO PUSH FOR "AUTONOMY" FOR THE OVERSEAS. HE ALSO HAS THE WEIGHT OF INCUMBENCY IN A SOCIETY WHERE CHANGE SHOCKS. THE COUNCIL OF STATE (POTENTIAL ARBITER OF POWER IN CRISES) IN HIS, AND MOST OF HIS CABINET IS LOYAL TO HIM. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS ALSO GENERALLY DEPENDABLE, AS ARE MOST DISTRICT GOVERNORS. (C) THOMAZ HAS THE CONSTITUTION. HE CAN DISMISS CAETANO WHENEVER HE WISHES, ALTHOUGH HE IS RESTRAINED BY HIS OWN READING OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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POLITICAL REALITIES. NO-ONE CAN FORCE THOMAZ TO RESIGN; A RESIGNATION UNDER DURESS WOULD BE A COUP, AND CAETANO, AS WELL AS THE MILITARY, IS SAID TO RECOIL FROM THE PROSPECT.

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-16 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

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4. POLITICAL SCENE IS TROUBLED AND CONFUSED.

OPPOSITIONIST (AND PRO-SPINOLA) DAILY REPUBLICA AND WEEKLY EXPRESSO HAVE UNEXPECTEDLY FOREGONE COMMENT ON SPINOLA'S PROPOSALS (BEYOND INITIAL EUPHORIA REPORTED REFTEL), AS HAS RIGHT-WING PRESS. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHICH USUALLY PROVIDES DAILY FORUM FOR SEVERAL SPEAKERS FOR TOPICS OF THEIR CHOOSING, HAD ONLY ONE SPEAKER INSCRIBED FOR POST-RECESS SESSION MARCH 5 (SEE BELOW). TV AND NEWSPAPERS CONCENTRATING ON TRIVIA OR ON INTERNATIONAL EVENTS.

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5. WIDE RANGE OF INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS OF POLITICAL/ MILITARY ELITE UNDERWAY: (A) GROUP OF PROMINENT RIGHTISTS, INCLUDING TENREIRO AND NOGUEIRA, MET LATE LAST WEEK; (B) MILITARY GOVERNORS AND OTHER MILITARY OFFICIALS OF

METROPOLE MET IN LISBON MARCH 4 IN ARMY MINISTER'S OFFICE;
(C) CAETANO IS MEETING REGULARLY WITH REFORMIST ALLIES SUCH
AS TECHNOCRAT JOAO SALGUEIRO AND OVERSEAS MINISTER REBELLO
DE SOUSA; (D) THOMAZ HAS MET WITH FRANCO MOGUEIRA AND HENRIQUE
TENREIRO; (E) POLITICOS OF ALL STRIPES APPEAR TO BE IN
PERMANENT HUDDLES.

6. IN RESPONSE TO CRISIS (WHICH DOES NOT EXIST AT ALL
FOR THOSE WHO DEPEND ON THE MEDIA), CAETANO IS PREPAR-
ING GRANDSTAND PLAY. HE HAS REPORTEDLY SCRAPPED
EARLIER IDEA OF NATIONWIDE TV ADDRESS IN FAVOR OF
DRAMATIC APPEARANCE BEFORE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS
MARCH OPENING AFTER 10 DAY RECESS. WE EXPECT PM TO MAKE
STRONG PITCH FOR RECONCILIATION FOLLOWED BY CALL FOR
VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN HIS LEADERSHIP.

7. COMMENT: CAETANO'S SUCCESS (IF HE ACHIEVES IT)
AT PAPERING OVER DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED VIEWS AND POLICIES
WILL GIVE HIM A SHORT BREATHING SPACE AT BEST. ALTHOUGH
PORTUGAL HAS SHOWN UNCANNY ABILITY TO PASS THROUGH CRISES APPARENTLY
UNSCATHED, BITTERNESS ENGENDERED BY CURRENT CRISIS WILL MAKE
IT DIFFICULT FOR THOMAZ AND CAETANO AND SPINOLA/COSTA GOMES TO
REMAIN IN GOVERNMENT FOR VERY LONG. FAR-REACHING DECISIONS
ON AFRICAN POLICY MAY WELL BE IN THE OFFING.
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